

June 19, 2008

OBEY WINS EXPANSION OF GI BILL BENEFITS FOR VETERANS AND UNEMPLOYMENT COMPENSATION FOR WORKERS

WASHINGTON, D.C. - Seventh District Congressman Dave Obey (D-WI) said today that, under the agreement reached on the supplemental appropriation package last night, educational benefits for our nation's veterans will receive the largest increase since the GI Bill was created during World War II, and the Administration backed down from its opposition to providing extended unemployment benefits for families impacted by the rough economy. The bill is expected to be considered by the House today.

"This war has not only asked unfair sacrifice from our military personal, it's also helped mess up our economy and we have an obligation to help folks affected by both," Obey said. "That's why I worked with Senator Jim Webb to insist on returning educational benefits for GIs to where they were for the World War II generation and why we stuck to our guns on extending unemployment benefits for hard pressed families. I'm glad the Administration has reconsidered its opposition to this relief."

New GI Bill for the 21st Century

Enacted in 1944, the original GI Bill was intended to thank U.S. troops for their service and help support the economy as it shifted away from a war time footing. The GI Bill paid the full load of a returning veteran's education at a college or technical school and provided a monthly stipend. By 1956, nearly 8 million World War II veterans had taken advantage of GI Bill education and job training, and the record shows that every dollar spent on the program created a seven-fold return for the economy. However, over the years, GI Bill benefits have not kept pace with the rising cost of college education. Today, veterans' education benefits cover only about 60 percent of the cost of a public-school education.

The New GI Bill, which Obey included in the supplemental package because it represents another cost of the President's war policy, is intended to give our troops the tools to succeed

after military service and strengthen our economy in the face of increasing global competition. It provides service members, including reservists and National Guardsmen who have served on active duty since September 11, 2001, benefits to cover the costs of a four-year education up to the level of the most expensive in-state public school, along with a stipend for housing, books and other expenses. It is estimated that the first two years of the new GI bill would cost what we spend in just two days in Iraq.

Extended Unemployment Benefits

The sagging economy has hit working families especially hard. For four consecutive months the U.S. economy has lost jobs, and today over 1.3 million workers have been jobless for more than 26 weeks, the maximum length of time workers can receive unemployment benefits.

To help out those families who lost their jobs through no fault of their own - their plant closed or their employer went out of business because of deepening economic troubles - the supplemental package includes a 13 week extension of unemployment benefits.

That extension will not only help working families maintain income stability in the face of a challenging labor market, it will also provide an immediate economic stimulus. The Congressional Budget Office estimates that every \$1 spent on unemployment benefits generates \$1.73 in new economic demand.

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